

Southern cities hit hard by storms face new crisis: No water

By PAUL J. WEBER and ACACIA CORONADO
Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Southern cities slammed by winter storms that left millions without power for days have traded one crisis for another: Busted water pipes ruptured by record-low temperatures created shortages of clean drinking water, shut down the Memphis airport on Friday and left hospitals struggling to maintain sanitary conditions.

Texas authorities ordered 7 million people — a quarter of the population in the nation's second-largest state — to boil tap water before drinking it because low water pressure could have allowed bacteria to seep into the system. A man died at an Abilene health care facility when a lack of water pressure made medical treatment impossible. About 260,000 homes and businesses in Tennessee's largest county, which includes Memphis, were told to boil water because of water main ruptures and problems at pumping stations. Restaurants that



Devin Hodge and Nate Rowe wait in line to fill up their containers with water at Meanwhile Brewing Company in Austin, Texas, on Friday, Feb. 19, 2021, during a citywide boil water notice caused by the winter storm.

Associated Press

can't do so or don't have bottled water were ordered to close. And water

pressure problems prompted Memphis International Airport to cancel all incom-

ing and outgoing Friday flights. In Jackson, Mississippi, most

of the city of about 161,000 had no running water.

Continued on next page

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Water to be loaded into vehicles is stacked at a City of Houston water distribution site Friday, Feb. 19, 2021, in Houston.

Associated Press

Continued from Front

Crews pumped water to refill city tanks but faced a shortage of chemicals for treatment because icy roads made it difficult for distributors to deliver them, Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba said.

She laid blame on city water pipes that are more than 100 years old, saying they were not built to handle the freezing weather that the city was hit with as multiple storms dumped record amounts of snow across the South.

"We are dealing with an extreme challenge with getting more water through our distribution system," said Lumumba.

The city was providing water for flushing toilets and drinking, but residents had to pick it up, leaving the elderly and those living on icy roads vulnerable.

Lisa Thomas said her driveway on a hill in Jackson was a sheet of ice. Her husband, who is on a defibrillator and heart monitor, has only enough heart medication to get him through Sunday because she hasn't been able to go to the pharmacy.

"People are in dire need here," Thomas said.

Water woes were the latest misery for residents left without heat or electricity for days after the ice and snow storms earlier in the week, forcing rolling blackouts from Minnesota to Texas.

Texas electrical grid operators said Friday that transmission had returned to normal for the first time since a storm knocked out power to more than 4 million customers. Smaller outages remained, but Bill Magness, president of the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, said the grid can now provide power throughout the entire system.

Gov. Greg Abbott ordered an investigation into the failure for state known as the U.S. energy capital. ERCOT officials have defended their preparations and the decision to begin forced outages Monday as the grid reached a breaking point.

The storms also left more than 330,000 from Virginia to Louisiana without power. About 70,000 in Oregon on Friday were still enduring a weeklong outage fol-

lowing a massive ice and snow storm. Oregon's governor ordered the National Guard to go door-to-door in the hardest-hit areas to ensure residents have enough food and water.

The extreme weather was blamed for the deaths of at least 60 people, including people struggling to get warm and a Tennessee farmer who tried to save two calves that apparently wandered onto a frozen pond.

Federal Emergency Management Agency acting administrator Bob Fenton said teams in Texas were distributing fuel, water, blankets and other supplies.

"What has me most worried is making sure that people stay warm," Fenton said on "CBS This Morning."

In many areas, water pressure dropped after lines froze and because people left faucets dripping to prevent pipes from icing, authorities said.

As of Thursday afternoon, more than 1,000 Texas public water systems and 177 of the state's 254 counties had reported weather-related operational disruptions, af-

fecting more than 14 million people, according to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

More than 1 million gallons (3.8 million liters) of water was being trucked Friday to the Texas capital. But Austin's water director, Greg Maszaros, implored residents to minimize the use of home faucets because "there's still a lot of unknowns as we pressurize the system."

In Dallas, David Lopez said the plumbing company he works for received more than 600 calls for service over the last week.

"It's pretty much first come, first served," said Lopez, as he and a colleague manhandled a new water heater out of their van on Friday. "Everyone's got emergencies."

Houston residents probably will have to boil tap water in the fourth-largest U.S. city until Sunday or Monday, said Mayor Sylvester Turner. Water service was restored Friday to two Houston Methodist community hospitals, but officials were still bringing in drinking water and some elective surgeries were canceled, spokes-

woman Gale Smith said. St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis said it was forced to switch to bottled water and bagged ice for all consumption and that staff and patients were washing with hand sanitizer and no-rinse bathing wipes. All non-urgent surgeries were postponed.

Central Arkansas Water, which services the Little Rock area, asked customers to conserve water to help protect its system as the ground began to warm and pipes thawed. The city of Hot Springs warned Thursday night that its water supply was at "critically low" levels and also asked customers to conserve.

In Little Rock, the Museum of Discovery reported that a broken pipe flooded its building — causing extensive damage to theaters, galleries and offices and killing one display animal, a blue-tongued skink lizard. More than 192,000 Louisiana residents — some still struggling to recover from last August's Hurricane Laura — had no water service Friday, according to the the state health department. Tens of thousands more remained under boil-water advisories, according to the health department.

Bulk and bottled water deliveries were planned Friday to the hardest-hit Louisiana areas with a focus on hospitals, nursing homes and dialysis centers, Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards said. Edwards said he was grateful that warmer weather was in the forecast by Saturday.

"I expect that over the next several days, we will make repairs to the water systems and get things functioning as close to normal as possible," the governor said in a live event with the Washington Post. In the community of Hackberry, near Lake Charles, Louisiana, Nicole Beard said her boyfriend crawled under his house to try to fix a broken water line but couldn't because he didn't have the right parts and it was too dark. She was using bottled water and sent her two daughters to another home.

"People are still just struggling over here," she said. □

Biden declares 'America is back' in welcome words to allies

By AAMER MADHANI

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden used his first address before a global audience Friday to declare that "America is back, the transatlantic alliance is back," after four years of a Trump administration that flaunted its foreign policy through an "America First" lens.

Speaking to the annual Munich Security Conference virtually, Biden ticked through a daunting to-do list -- salvaging the Iran nuclear deal, meeting economic and security challenges posed by China and Russia and repairing the damage caused by the coronavirus pandemic — that he said would require close cooperation between the U.S. and its Western allies.

Without mentioning Donald Trump's name once in his speech, Biden mixed talk of a reinvigorated democratic alliance with a rebuke of his predecessor's approach, a message warmly received by Western allies. "I know the past few years have strained and tested the transatlantic relationship," Biden said. "The United States is determined to reengage with Europe, to consult with you, to earn back our position of trusted leadership."

The president also participated Friday in a virtual meeting of the Group of Seven industrialized nations, where leaders managed to work Biden's campaign theme into their closing joint statement, vowing to "work together to beat COVID-19 and build back better."

"Welcome back, America," said European Council President Charles Michel, effectively summing up the mood of the Munich conference.

But while such happy talk conveyed the palpable sense of relief among allies at Biden's full-throated commitment to mending frayed U.S.-Europe relations, plenty has changed over the past four years in ways creating new challenges.



President Joe Biden speaks during a virtual event with the Munich Security Conference in the East Room of the White House, Friday, Feb. 19, 2021, in Washington.

Associated Press

China has cemented its place as a fierce economic competitor on the continent as the U.S. has reconsidered long-held national security and economic priorities embedded in the transatlantic alliance. Populism has grown through much of Europe. And other Western countries have, at moments, sought to fill the vacuum left as America stepped back from the world stage.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel noted that some differences between the U.S. and Europe remain "complicated." Europe sees China's economic ambitions as less of an existential threat than the U.S. does and has its own strategic and economic concerns that are not always in sync with Biden on Russia as well. Still, Merkel, who had a strained relationship with Trump, didn't hide her preference for an American foreign policy informed by Biden's world view.

"Things are looking a great deal better for multilateralism this year than two years ago, and that has a lot to do with Joe Biden having become the president of the United States of America," Merkel said. "His speech just now, but also his administration's first announcements, have convinced us that this is not just talk but

action."

Biden made his address to a global audience as his administration this week took steps to reverse key Trump administration policies.

He said that the U.S. stands ready to rejoin talks about reentering the 2015 multilateral Iran nuclear deal abandoned by the Trump administration. The Biden administration announced Thursday its desire to reengage Iran, and it took action at the United Nations aimed at restoring policy to what it was before Trump withdrew from the deal in 2018.

Biden also spoke out about the two-decade war in Afghanistan, where he faces a May 1 deadline to remove the remaining 2,500 U.S. troops under a Trump administration negotiated peace agreement with the Taliban. He also called for cooperation in addressing economic and national security challenges posed by Russia and China and identified cyberspace, artificial intelligence and biotechnology as areas of growing competition.

"We must prepare together for long-term strategic competition with China," Biden declared.

His message was girded by an underlying argument that democracies -- not au-

tocracies -- are models of governance that can best meet the challenges of the moment. The president urged fellow world leaders to show together that "democracies can still deliver." At the G-7, administration officials said, Biden focused on what lies ahead for the international community as it tries to extinguish the public health and economic crises created by the coronavirus pandemic. He announced the U.S. will soon begin releasing \$4 billion for an international effort to bolster the purchase and distribution of vaccine to poor nations, a program that Trump refused to support.

Biden's turn on the world stage came as the U.S. officially rejoined the Paris climate agreement, the largest international effort to curb global warming. Trump announced in June 2017 that he was pulling the U.S. out of the landmark accord, arguing that the pact would undermine the American economy.

Biden announced the U.S. intention of rejoining on the first day of his presidency, but he had to wait 30 days for the move to go into effect. He has said that he will bake considerations about climate change into every major domestic and foreign policy decision his

administration faces.

"This is a global existential crisis," Biden said.

Biden also encouraged G-7 partners to make good on their pledges to COVAX, an initiative by the World Health Organization to improve access to vaccines, even as he reopens the U.S. spigot.

Trump had withdrawn the U.S. from WHO and refused to join more than 190 countries in the COVAX program. The Republican former president accused WHO of covering up China's missteps in handling the virus at the start of the public health crisis that unraveled a strong U.S. economy.

Biden urged greater international cooperation on vaccine distribution amid growing calls for his administration to distribute some U.S.-manufactured vaccine supplies overseas.

French President Emmanuel Macron has called on the U.S. and European nations to allocate up to 5% of current vaccine supplies to developing countries — the kind of vaccine diplomacy that China and Russia already are deploying.

Biden, who announced last week that the U.S. will have enough vaccine by the end of July to inoculate 300 million people, remains focused for now on making sure every American is vaccinated, administration officials say. Macron on Friday again pressed the U.S. and Europe to do more.

"It is up to Europeans and Americans to allow all the poor and emerging countries in the world to get access to vaccines as fast as possible," he said.

Allies were listening closely to what Biden had to say about a looming crisis with Iran.

Iran informed the International Atomic Energy Agency this week that it would suspend voluntary implementation next week of a provision in the 2015 deal that allowed U.N. nuclear monitors to conduct inspections of undeclared sites in Iran at short notice unless the U.S. rolled back sanctions by Feb. 23. □

Guns in capitol buildings divide states after armed protests

By IRIS SAMUELS and LINDSAY WHITEHURST

Associated Press/Report for America

HELENA, Mont. (AP) — In the past year, insurrectionists have breached the U.S. Capitol and armed protesters have forced their way into statehouses around the country. But the question of whether guns should be allowed in capitol buildings remains political, and states are going in opposite directions.

In Montana, a law signed Thursday allows anyone with a permit to bring a concealed firearm into the Statehouse, reversing a decadeslong ban and fulfilling a longtime hope of Republicans who took control of the governor's mansion and the Legislature this year. GOP-dominated Utah passed a law this month allowing people to carry concealed weapons in its Capitol and elsewhere in the state without a permit.

Guns are allowed in statehouses in some form in 21 states, according to a review by The Associated Press. Eight states allow only concealed firearms inside their capitols, while two states allow only open carry.

Montana and Utah are two



In this Jan. 6, 2021, file photo, armed men stand on the steps at the State Capitol after a rally in support of President Donald Trump in Lansing, Mich.

Associated Press

of at least 13 states that do not have metal detectors at the entrance to their capitols. The statehouses are open to the public even as many have closed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Several other states, though, are moving to restrict guns inside their capitols. In Michigan, where armed protesters forced their way inside the Statehouse last year and the FBI said it uncovered a plot to kidnap the governor, a

state panel banned the open carry of guns after the Jan. 6 riot in Washington, D.C. Democratic state Sen. Dayna Polehanki said that "tensions are high" in Michigan following the assaults, and she's disappointed that concealed weapons are still allowed in the Statehouse.

"What they said is that weapons, guns, bullets are still welcome in our state Capitol as long as we can't see them. It doesn't make anyone safer," she said.

Vermont lawmakers, meanwhile, are considering expanding their Statehouse ban on guns to other government buildings. In Washington state, a measure that would ban open carry of guns in the Capitol and near permitted demonstrations has cleared a committee and is awaiting a vote by the full Senate.

"The purpose of openly carrying a weapon is to chill other people's voices. And it works," said its sponsor, Democratic state Sen. Pat-

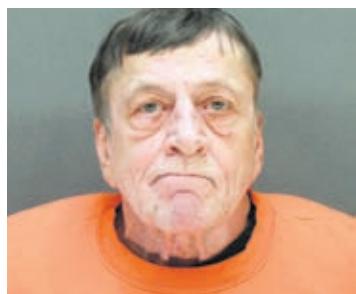
ty Kuderer.

In nearby Oregon, crowds opposed to the Statehouse being closed to the public during a pandemic-related session stormed the building, including at least one person armed with an AR-15. And in Idaho, self-styled "patriots," anti-vaccination groups and others forced their way past police at the Capitol in August, shattering a window as they pushed and shoved into a gallery. In Montana, though, Republican Rep. Seth Berglee said the U.S. Capitol riot didn't affect his thinking about the law he sponsored.

"People that have a permit are extremely law-abiding, and they are the type of people I would want to have around. I see them as being a deterrent to bad things happening," he said. There's a similar proposal this year in Oklahoma, where gun rights advocates are again pushing to allow people with a license to carry firearms inside the Capitol. It hasn't yet had a hearing.

"A person needs to be able to protect themselves, no matter where they are," said Don Spencer, president of the Oklahoma Second Amendment Association. □

Warrant: Opioid addiction may have motivated clinic shooting



This booking photo released by the Wright County, Minn., Sheriff's Office shows Gregory Paul Ulrich who was arrested Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2021, following a shooting at a health clinic in Buffalo, Minn.

Associated Press

BUFFALO, Minn. (AP) — An alleged gunman's addiction to opioid medication was the "driving force" behind last week's shooting at a Minnesota health clinic that left one person dead

and four injured, a veteran investigator said in his application for a search warrant.

Wright County Deputy Patrick Bailey said authorities found a plastic bag containing six oxycodone pills when they searched Gregory Ulrich's hotel room after the Feb. 9 shooting at an Allina Health clinic in Buffalo, a small city about 40 miles (65 kilometers) northwest of Minneapolis. Bailey also described a video in which Ulrich mentioned taking more than 30 pills at a time.

"It is clear to your affiant that Ulrich has a dependency on opioid style pain medications, and was upset that his legal supply

had been stopped," Bailey wrote in the warrant application, which was obtained by KARE-TV. "Your affiant also believes that Ulrich's dependency on pain medication is the driving force behind his assault which resulted in the death of Lindsay Overbay and multiple serious injuries to others."

Ulrich, 67, is charged with murder, attempted murder and other counts in the shooting that left Overbay, a 37-year-old medical assistant, dead. According to the charges, Ulrich walked into the clinic and began shooting staff after they asked if they could help him. He shot two people in the reception area and

three others in the clinic's interior. He is also accused of setting off three suspected pipe bombs.

Bailey wrote about Ulrich's apparent dependency on opioids in an application for a search warrant for Ulrich's medical records.

KARE-TV reports that Ulrich had back surgery in 2016, and shortly after that, he was taken back to the hospital after overdosing on opioids, which led a doctor at the clinic to cut off his supply of pain medication. Court documents show that Ulrich threatened a mass shooting at the clinic in 2018. That threat led to a restraining order that barred Ulrich from the clinic and a nearby hospital

and ordered him to have no contact with a doctor. Ulrich tried to plead guilty in May 2019 to violating the restraining order, but a judge didn't accept his plea. A charge of violating the restraining order was dismissed last April when the prosecutor said Ulrich was found "mentally incompetent to proceed."

"Through training and experience, Your Affiant knows individuals who abuse controlled substances, such as Oxycodone, are often unable to obtain through legal means. Your Affiant also knows that people who obtain Oxycodone legally, rarely store the pills in a sandwich bag," Bailey wrote. □

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G-7 vows 'equitable' world vaccine access, but details scant

LONDON (AP) — Leaders of the Group of Seven economic powers promised Friday to immunize the world's neediest people against the coronavirus by giving money, and precious vaccine doses, to a U.N.-backed vaccine distribution effort.

But the leaders, under pressure over their vaccination campaigns at home, were unwilling to say exactly how much vaccine they were willing to share with the developing world, or when. Chancellor Angela Merkel said after the G-7 leaders held a virtual meeting that fair distribution of vaccines was "an elementary question of fairness."

But she added, "No vaccination appointment in Germany is going to be endangered."

After their first meeting of the year -- held remotely because of the pandemic -- the leaders said they would accelerate global vaccine development and deployment and support "affordable and equitable access to vaccines" and treatments for COVID-19. They cited a collective \$7.5 billion from the G-7 to U.N.-backed COVID-19 efforts. "This is a global pandemic, and it's no use one country being far ahead of another," British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said as he opened the virtual summit with the leaders of the United States, France, Germany, Italy, Canada and



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson hosts a virtual meeting of G7 world leaders, from within the Cabinet Room at Downing Street in London, Friday Feb. 19, 2021.

Associated Press

Japan. The U.K. holds the G-7 presidency this year.

"We've got to move together," Johnson said, speaking from the prime minister's 10 Downing St. residence to the other leaders in their far-flung offices. "So, one of the things that I know that colleagues will be wanting to do is to ensure that we distribute vaccines at cost around the world."

Wealthy nations have snapped up several billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines, while some countries in the developing world have little or none.

G-7 leaders are eager to avoid looking greedy and don't want to cede the ter-

rain of vaccine diplomacy to less democratic but faster-moving countries such as China and Russia.

Johnson, whose country has reported almost 120,000 virus-related deaths, promised to give "the majority of any future surplus vaccines" to the U.N.-backed COVAX effort to vaccinate the world's most vulnerable people.

But Foreign Office Minister James Cleverly said it was "difficult to say with any kind of certainty" when or how much Britain could donate. French President Emmanuel Macron gave a firmer target, saying Europe and the U.S. should allocate up to 5% of their

current COVID-19 vaccine supplies to the poorest countries quickly.

"This is worth an enormous amount. It is worth our credibility," Macron said after the meeting.

"If we can do this, then the West will have a presence" in African countries, he said. If not, those countries will turn to Chinese and Russian vaccines and "the power of the West will...not be a reality."

Macron's office said France was ready to hand over 5% of its doses but would not give exact numbers or a date. As the African continent awaits delivery of doses through COVAX, an African Union-created vac-

cines task force said Friday that it would be getting 300 million doses of Russia's Sputnik V vaccine in May. The AU previously secured 270 million doses from AstraZeneca, Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson for the continent of 1.3 billion people. The governments of Canada and the European G-7 nations are under pressure to speed up their domestic vaccination campaigns after being outpaced by Britain and the U.S.

Asked later Friday about Macron's proposal, Germany's Merkel said that "we have not yet spoken about the percentage."

"We haven't yet spoken about the timing" either, the chancellor told reporters in Berlin. "That still has to be discussed."

Development and aid groups welcomed the commitments but said rich Western countries needed to do more, and soon.

Gayle Smith, chief executive of anti-poverty group the ONE Campaign, said "world leaders are finally waking up to the scale of this crisis."

"It beggars belief that in the midst of a global pandemic a handful of countries have accumulated over a billion vaccines more than they will need, while 130 countries have no vaccines at all," she said. The summit marked Biden's his first major multilateral engagement since taking office. □

UK's MI6 apologizes for past treatment of LGBT spies

LONDON (AP) — The head of Britain's MI6 intelligence

service apologized Friday to gay spies and aspiring

agents who were fired or denied jobs because of their sexuality.

Richard Moore said in a video statement on Twitter that a ban on LGBT spies that lasted until 1991 was "wrong, unjust and discriminatory."

Moore was appointed last year as C, the code name given to the director of Britain's overseas intelligence agency the real-life equivalent of James Bond's boss, M.

Although same-sex relationships were decriminalised in England in 1967,

gay people continued to be barred from working in Britain's intelligence services on security grounds, because of the view that they were more susceptible to blackmail than straight people.

Moore said that because of that "misguided" view, "loyal and patriotic people had their dreams of serving their country in MI6 shattered."

"Today, I apologize on behalf of MI6 for the way our LGBT+ colleagues and fellow citizens were treated and express my regret to

those whose lives were affected," he said.

Moore also said homophobia lingered after the ban was lifted, meaning some staff were unable "to be their true selves in the workplace."

"We still have more to do to become a fully inclusive employer, and my goal for MI6 is to make it a workplace where you can always bring your true self to work," said Moore.

Because of MI6 secrecy it is not known how many people were affected by the discriminatory policy. □



This Thursday, March 5, 2015 file photo shows a general view of the MI6 building in London.

Associated Press

U.N. rights experts concerned over India's changes in Kashmir

By AIJAZ HUSSAIN

Associated Press

SRINAGAR, India (AP) —

U.N. human rights experts have urged India to ensure that the rights of people in Kashmir are safeguarded after New Delhi stripped the disputed region's semi-autonomous status and imposed a slew of administrative changes through new laws.

Two experts for the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights said in a statement that the changes "could curtail the previous level of political participation of Muslims and other minorities" and expressed concerns about demographic changes in the region.

The statement late Thursday came as diplomats from more than 20 countries stationed in India's capital concluded a two-day visit to the region.

Indian External Affairs Ministry spokesman Anurag Srivastava deplored the experts' statement and said they had sent the government a questionnaire on Feb. 10 and "did not even wait for our response."

"Instead, they chose to release their inaccurate assumptions to the media," he said, adding that it "has also been deliberately timed to coincide with the



In this Friday, Aug. 23, 2019, file photo, Kashmiris shout freedom slogans during a protest against New Delhi's tightened grip on the disputed region, after Friday prayers on the outskirts of Srinagar, Indian controlled Kashmir.

visit" of foreign diplomats. Srivastava said the statement "disregards the fact" that Kashmir "is an integral and inalienable part of India" and that the decision to remove its semi-autonomy was made by India's Parliament. He also called concerns over demographic changes "baseless and unfounded."

"We expect the special rapporteurs to develop a better understanding of the issues under their consideration before jumping

to hasty conclusions and issuing press statements," he said.

In August 2019 amid a harsh crackdown, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist-led government stripped Kashmir of its statehood, scrapped its separate constitution and removed inherited protections on land and jobs. It divided and downgraded the region to a federally governed territory.

Since then, many new laws have been enacted,

including a new domicile law, which critics say is the beginning of a colonialization by Hindu Indian settlers aimed at engineering a demographic change in the region.

Fernand de Varennes, the special rapporteur on minority issues, and Ahmed Shaheed, the special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, said after the changes, the region's people "have lost power to legislate or amend laws" to protect their rights as mi-

norities.

"These legislative changes may have the potential to pave the way for people from outside the former state of Jammu and Kashmir to settle in the region, alter the demographics of the region and undermine the minorities' ability to exercise effectively their human rights," the experts said.

"The number of successful applicants for domicile certificates that appear to be from outside Jammu and Kashmir raises concerns that demographic change on a linguistic, religious and ethnic basis is already underway," they said.

The experts are in contact with the Indian government, their statement said. Muslim-majority Kashmir is divided between India and Pakistan but claimed by both in its entirety. Rebels in the region have been fighting against Indian rule since 1989.

Before the 2019 change, Indian-controlled Kashmir was a state with special provisions in the Indian Constitution that granted its people special rights.

Outside access to the region remains limited, with no foreign journalists allowed except ones who are taken on government-guided trips. □

Associated Press

Nicaragua creates Ministry of Extraterrestrial Space Affairs

MANAGUA, Nicaragua (AP) —

Nicaragua has created a new National Ministry for Extraterrestrial Space Affairs, The Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, which is drawing amused reactions on social media in a nation that has been struggling since anti-government protests three years ago. The agency was approved by 76 legislators Wednesday in the country's congress, which is dominated by President Daniel Ortega's Sandinista Party. Fifteen opposition legislators abstained.

In a country that has a hard time supplying its people with food, fuel and coronavirus vaccines, it is not clear exactly what the

ministry is supposed to do. It will be under the control of the Nicaraguan army, which has no space program. The law says the ministry "will promote the development of space activities, with the aim of broadening the country's capacities in the fields of education, industry, science and technology."

Geologist Jaime Incer Barquero, president of Nicaragua's Academy of Geography and History, told CNN: "Nicaragua does not have a scientific capacity or tradition, does not have a serious (space) observatory. We are not scientifically able as a country to undertake this type of research."

Social media users were quick to create memes of Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, dressed as astronauts, and of Nicaraguan police expropriating the moon, as Ortega has done with some buildings in Nicaragua that belonged to media outlets and civic groups he disagreed with. Critics said the country does not have the money to spare for dreams of space exploration. It has yet to acquire any coronavirus vaccines and has been in a deep social and economic crisis since the government quashed mass protests in 2018.

The space agency is not be the first time Ortega has

endorsed quixotic proposals. In 2014 he authorized a Chinese company to build

a \$50 billion canal across Nicaragua. The project has made little headway.



In this Sept. 5, 2018 file photo, Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega and his wife and Vice President Rosario Murillo, lead a rally in Managua, Nicaragua.

Associated Press

LOCAL



First buyers of new Commandeurs Ponton Apartments a fact: Intentional living that focuses on what you believe matters

ORANJESTAD — “The philosophy is to get more out of life and live in a great environment that is also sustainable,” says Randolph Arends from Aruba Living Today. The property mediator is referring to their newest offering: Commandeurs Ponton Apartments. Construction of the complex has already started and Arends is happy to present to us the first buyers from the Netherlands. Why did they choose for Commandeurs?

“The perfect location, the environmental friendliness of the project with solar panels, the community feeling which is especially important when you have a certain age made us decide for Commandeurs. The prospect clearly states that this is the best purchase for starters and people who retire and we cannot agree more on that. On top of that we will be able to enjoy Aruba’s famous sunsets,” says the owner. They looked for an affordable and small apartment, though very comfortable and convenient and they found it. “We are beyond happy.”

The modern designed project shines with happy, bright colors and offers affordable 2-bedroom, 1-bathroom apartments built with high quality European materials. Ocean view, centrally located, a community pool and great value for money. On September 14th 2020, construction started of the first of three buildings. “Now we started the first building with eight 72 m² (775 sq. ft.) apartments and eight 54 m² (581 sq. ft.) apartments. Pre-construction prices start at \$ 152,000, but in the course of the building will increase. So get it while you can,” Arends hints. He is happy to inform that several options on apartments



Happy first owners

are already taken.

Unique on the island: Home care offering & permit handling

Arends: “What we see is that Aruba is very popular with the older generation, the pensionaries. Reasons are the stable warm climate, the quiet and long-stretched white-sandy beaches, the location outside of the hurricane belt, the safety of the island, the political stability, the high quality infrastructure and our friendly people. And let us not forget the high quality health care, founded on the system of the Netherlands.” Aruba Living Today noticed that this type of buyer also requires assistance in several areas and they decided to take it all out of hands and offer more than the average realtor. “We are unique in this because we have our own certified Dutch nurse (multilingual) available for our home owners meaning there is a 24/7 home care for you standby. The interior design of our apart-

ments will be as convenient as possible and wheelchair friendly with stable doors and wider entrance. We will be offering different packages of home care support and retirement permits. We are evaluating a shuttle service to take people to town and to the beach. Yes, we are here to release you of any hassle and give you back happiness and peace in mind!”

Details that matter

The development is close to the new Watty Vos Boulevard putting you within five minutes to Eagle Beach (voted as one of the best beaches in the world), the supermarkets and the downtown area. The building will have central air conditioning and the stair-



Randolph Arends (right) with the first buyer

case or elevator will take you up to the higher floors which provide a spectacular view to the Caribbean Sea. By owning one of the apartments, you will automatically be a part of the owner’s association which together will take care of the community grounds, pool, elevators and solar panels (on the roof and parking lot) to lower the costs of electricity. Arends: “Not too expensive, not too big. A good size apartment for those who strive to live comfortable yet still have the financial space to travel and do other things in life.”

A happy, low-stress life provides the space to figure out what matters most and the freedom to focus on these things. Instead of

spending your weekends on home maintenance projects or mowing a yard, you can go to the beach and the pool. You can relax more and even nap more (yes!) without thinking about things that need done around the house. Commandeur Ponton Apartments is all about intentional living, a concept that suits Aruba Living Today completely. Arends: “My goal was to do real estate in a different way when I established this company June 1st 2009. Not from the perspective of only selling, but to look for the perfect match between dream house and client. My philosophy is: it will only work when all involved are happy and connected by that personal touch.”



Aruba Living Today

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Aruban artist receives international recognition

ORANJESTAD — Beginning of this year a well-known Aruban artist was approached by a studio in Manchester, UK, to propose a work of art that would function as a public monument in the UK. This month the artist, Gilbert Senchi, also inaugurated his public art as an official representative in Dubai.

Going back more Senchi created a piece of art for the company Rolls Royce and their retired engineer nuclear submarine division. Recently the artist signed a contract with the Military University of Colombia for a monumental work at their campus in Bogota. The artist's international recogni-

tion is growing and also regional he has earned his stripes. Last year Senchi created and inaugurated a monument for the island of Bonaire as a homage to Sr. Tavo Sint Jago.

In Italy the Museum of Modern Art in Bologna worked with the artist as well when he was living there and in Berlin, Germany he opened a studio to work on the famous sculpture Berlin Studios. In conjunction with the 500 years of existence of Amsterdam, Senchi was invited at the "Arti et Amicitia" art society while he is also a member of the prestigious Campden Art Centre in London, UK.

His private collection of art is to be admired in the US cities of Chicago, Ohio, New York, New Jersey, Miami, Boston, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Atlanta and Orlando among others. Senchi has completed art for King Albert of Monaco, King Willem Alexander and Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands and other royal families. The foundation for public art ARTopia informs the community that the artist has his work exhibited in local museums and around the island. At the moment he is working on a



public art piece which will for sure have a positive impact on the island. Aruba is proud to have Gilbert

Senchi, originally from San Nicolas, as internationally recognized artist. □



New Jersey honorees at Playa Linda Beach Resort



PALM BEACH — Recently, Kimberley Richardson of the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure to honor Aruba's loyal and friendly visitors as Distinguished Visitors of Aruba. The symbolic distinguished visitor certificate is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba 10 years and more consecutively.

The honorees were Mr. Stuart & Mrs. Susan Ritter from New Jersey, USA.

These wonderful people stated that they love the island very much, especially for the year-round sunny weather, nice sandy beaches, its safety, the delicious variety of foods and Aruba's warm and friendly people.

Richardson together with the representatives of the Playa Linda Beach Resort presented the certificate to the honorees, handed over some presents and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination and as their home away from home. □

“Take your car off the beaten track to meet our monuments and their stories”

ORANJESTAD — The mix of cultures in Aruba is very visible in its architecture as -like in all cultures-, monuments reflect your history and your people. If you take the chance to leave the beach for a little while and take your car off the beaten track you will be surprised what you see. Anne Witsenburg is director of the Monument Fund Aruba (SMFA) and points out precisely why a monumental trip should not lack in your vacation's itinerary.

The fund owns 15 monuments, out of the 36 protected monuments in the island. “But there are over 300 more monuments on the list to be protected and of course we dream to see that become reality as soon as possible.” The international guidelines that apply for monuments decide whether it will be a protected monument or not. “The building or object needs to be at least 50 years old, a special value in architecture or to history or to the people of Aruba is required and there has to be a certain uniqueness. If it was changed too much throughout time or there are already any of the same kind it is a no go.”

Useless islands

There is a difference between the islands when it comes to monuments, as

Witsenburg explains. “That goes back to their history. Curacao used to be a very wealthy island where many -mainly Dutch- merchants lived close together and that is the reason you find this typical colonial Dutch style buildings packed in certain areas nowadays. They have more than 20 years of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) heritage. Than scattered around the rest of the island you will see the smaller country houses.” Aruba and Bonaire were called the useless islands in the colonial time, so any Indian willing to live here was given a small piece of land to build his home. “That is the reason you find all these typical small houses scattered around the island. We actually have the same amount of monuments as Curacao though way smaller.”

Magic local touch

Some of the monuments owned by the Monument Fund Aruba are the light house, town hall, water tanks in both Oranjestad and San Nicolas. “We are wealthy in different styled monuments and my suggestion is to discover this world outside of the tourist zone. The book Monumental Guide comes in handy as there are three maps inside that guide you to the

monuments and tell you about them. But there are also possibilities to have your personal people guide. And the best is that I can almost guarantee you the magic of the local touch when you bump into an authentic cunucu house (country house) and talk to the owners. They will proudly share their family history with you.”

Outside inspiration

The Monument Fund acquires or buys monuments and restores them back into their former glory. Than they rent it out. “That sounds easy, but it is incredibly complex as most monuments have multiple owners due to the fact that inheritances are split and all need to decide upon the selling.” They cooperate with the government office of monuments because they set the rules of what you can and cannot do to a protected monument. “We also have the task to maintain the buildings which is an ongoing process. The wind, the salt in the air and the sun that not only burns human bodies but also buildings are huge challenges. Next to that we do education, create awareness and maintain public relations about our monuments.” The office of the Monument Fund is actually located in a monument itself.



The building is beautiful and has a tropical style. “This house goes back to the 1920's when it was built as a vacation house by Aruban entrepreneur Croes. He and his family came here to the outdoors as in those times there was only cunucu (countryside) here. They had big parties and enjoyed leisure time with family and friends.” Richer Arubans at that time looked outwards for architecture inspiration as that was considered chic, Witsenburg explains. Either to the US (art deco style like the water tower in San Nicolas), Holland (Dutch colonial style) or Colombia/Venezuela. “This house is inspired by a villa around Cartagena, Colombia. The ideas mostly came from the wives”, she says laughing.

Sustainable driven

Sustainability is a big thing to the Monument Fund Aruba. Witsenburg: “Obviously to restore old buildings and not destroy them to build new ones is already sustainable in itself. Than we have the technical sustainability

as in using the right materials and techniques but also the social sustainability. That includes looking at the non-tangible part of heritage: the stories to be told, the music to be played, the dinners that were cooked in the places we try to restore. That keeps it alive. Most of our monuments are meant to be lived in so we would like to reintroduce the joy of living in a monument. We work together with private companies to look into that.” In their office they installed solar panels, use LED lightning and recently implemented an electrical charging point for electric vehicles. □

The Monument Fund Aruba is open every day from Monday to Friday from 8am to 5pm. You are more than welcome to ask for information, guiding and help. For more information check out their Facebook page stichting monumenten fonds aruba and the website <http://www.monumentenfondsaruba.com>.



Investing ABCs: Teaching your kids about money and markets

By SARAH SKIDMORE SELL
AP Personal Finance Writer

The recent stock market mania over the video game company GameStop, which this week was scrutinized by Congress, has provided a teachable moment for kids.

The Associated Press talked to a few parents and financial experts for their tips on talking with kids about investing and the often confusing behavior of financial markets. Here's a summary of what they had to say.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Parents should make sure kids understand money basics before they try to conquer investing. Once they're ready, don't overwhelm kids with too much information at once — you risk them missing the lesson and losing interest.

Kids need to understand what stocks are, why people invest and how the markets work before they can understand investing.

"The best way to get kids interested in investing is to speak their language," said Carrie Schwab-Pomerantz, financial literacy expert and senior vice president at Charles Schwab & Co. "Start by explaining that investing is a means of using your money to try to create more money."

There are plenty of good resources — websites, apps, books — available to help guide the way in talking with kids about money and investing (or to help bolster parents' own knowledge). Among them: "A Kids Book About Money" by Adam Stramwasser and Schwab Money-Wise.

PRACTICE TIME

If they seem ready, let kids give investing a try.

Consider one of the many apps and games out there that allow people to simulate investing experiences. Those provide a good first step in a safe environment, said Paul Golden, spokesman for the National Endowment for Financial Education.

Try one that shows gains over a long period of time, 10 or 20 years, as that better illustrates the benefits of long-term investing.

Parents can also help kids identify companies they are interested in and track them using fictitious money just for fun. That presents an opportunity to explain why a stock might rise and fall in value at different points.

"If you are going to encourage your kid to buy stock help them to understand and have a point of view on why they should buy a stock," said Louis Taylor, president



In this Jan. 28, 2021, file photo, pedestrians pass a GameStop store on 14th Street at Union Square, in the Manhattan borough of New York.

Associated Press

of Taylor Wealth Management in Oregon and father of two.

You don't need to explain balance sheets, price-to-earnings ratios or anything technical just yet. Just help them establish clearer thinking about their decision-making process.

Taylor took this approach when several college students approached him during the GameStop runup asking if they should invest. Instead, he asked them why they would invest in GameStop if they don't even shop there. He was able to help them conclude that maybe there was little underlying value in the company.

"I think you should buy stock, but know why you are buying it," he said. "If you are passionate about (a stock) because you have a belief in a brand, that's one thing. Don't do it because you saw it on a message board."

Some parents open custodial brokerage accounts, which can be used to invest in stocks, bonds, mutual funds and more. The assets belong to the child but the adult holds control until they reach adulthood. Some parents allow the children to have some say in how these are invested as a learning opportunity. Jordan Wexler, CEO of EarlyBird, an app that specializes in custodial funds, said tying the concept of investing to something in their real life helps it come to life.

"Talking with them about their fa-

vorite interests and activities can lead to a much larger conversation about investing in valuable companies in a way that makes sense for them," he said.

TALK RISK

If the kids were intrigued by GameStop, talk about it.

Don't understand it? Here's a quick recap: GameStop is a struggling brick-and-mortar video game retailer. Some hedge funds and other big investors had little faith in it and "shorted" the stock, essentially betting its share price would fall. But some smaller investors decided to drive up the price by buying in.

When a stock is very heavily shorted, a rise in its price can force short sellers to get out of their bets. To do that, they have to buy the stock, which pushes the price even higher and can create a feedback loop. As GameStop's short sellers got squeezed last month, smaller and first-time investors used online forums to encourage each other to keep the momentum going.

The stock traded below \$10 for most of 2019 and 2020. This "short squeeze" sent it above \$480 last month before it dropped back to around \$40 as of Thursday.

Yes, some people made money. But some people lost big too.

Seize the opportunity to talk about how different investments involve different levels of risk. Higher risk investments can result in big gains, but big losses as well. Also, mention

how some investors might be able to bear those losses more than others.

THE LONG GAME

Ray Medeiros said he has long talked to his boys — ages 16 and 18 — about the importance of investing to build wealth. He worried they might be sucked in by the allure of a quick buck by GameStop. But he talked with them about how investing is a long-term endeavor. He also urged them to always think less like a day trader, who often lose, and more like Warren Buffett. "I told them if they wanted to invest in high risk, do it with money that you wouldn't miss if you lost it all, kind of like the scratch tickets," Medeiros said.

Jacklynn Manning kept it simple for her boys, ages 9 and 10. She explained some stock market basics, including how non-professional investors can "make a good profit if you play smart and conservatively, or maybe a great loss, if they get too greedy."

Children, especially teens who are on social media, paid attention to GameStop primarily because people are talking about it on social media platforms that they engage with. Teach them how to discern between good advice and bad. And remind them that you can't trust everything you read online. Parents should also recognize that investing looks different these days. □

Facebook makes a power move in Australia - and may regret it

By BARBARA ORTUTAY and TALI ARBEL

AP Technology Writers

For years, Facebook has been in a defensive crouch amid a slew of privacy scandals, antitrust lawsuits and charges that it was letting hate speech and extremism destroy democracy. Early Thursday, though, it abruptly pivoted to take the offensive in Australia, where it lowered the boom on publishers and the government with a sudden decision to block news on its platform across the entire country.

That power play — a response to an Australian law that would compel Facebook to pay publishers for using their news stories — might easily backfire, given how concerned many governments have grown about the company's unchecked influence over society, democracy and political discourse. But it's still a startling reminder of just how much power CEO Mark Zuckerberg can wield at the touch of a figurative button.

"Zuckerberg's flex here shows how he can disrupt global access to the news in a heartbeat," said Jennifer Grygiel, a social media expert and professor



Front pages of Australian newspapers are displayed featuring stories about Facebook in Sydney, Friday, Feb. 19, 2021.

Associated Press

at Syracuse University. "No company should have this much influence over access to journalism."

Facebook's move means people in Australia can no longer post links to news stories on Facebook. Outside Australia, meanwhile, no one can post links to Aussie news sources such as the Sydney Morning Herald.

Facebook said the proposed law "ignores the realities" of its relationship with

publishers that use its service to propel their stories across the world. Technology and media experts have also raised serious concerns. Timothy Berners-Lee, the British computer scientist known as the inventor of the World Wide Web, told an Australian Senate committee in January that the law's precedent could ultimately wreck the internet by requiring payment for links that have always been free.

The law hasn't gone into effect. Negotiations between the tech companies, the Australian government and the country's media giants — most notably, Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. — may result in changes to the final version.

What can't be changed, though, is Facebook's dramatic, if ham-handed, attempt to force the issue. The company provided no warning of its decision to block Australian news and

applied the ban so clumsily that it blocked many innocent bystanders.

"As the law does not provide a clear guidance on the definition of news content, we have taken a broad definition in order to respect the law as drafted," said Facebook spokeswoman Mari Melguizo, who added that the company would unblock any pages that were blocked by accident.

Facebook's reaction was not justified even if there are issues with the law, including the fact that it stands to benefit media giants like News Corp., said Elizabeth Renieris, director of the Notre Dame-IBM Technology Ethics Lab. Facebook's show of strength, she said, is "really going to wake up regulators around the world."

"If it is not already clear, Facebook is not compatible with democracy," Rep. David Cicilline, a Rhode Island Democrat who heads a House subcommittee that has urged antitrust action against the company, wrote on Twitter. "Threatening to bring an entire country to its knees to agree to Facebook's terms is the ultimate admission of monopoly power." □

United: Small electric air taxis will zip people to airports



This photo provided by Archer shows the company's eVTOL aircraft.

Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — United Airlines said Wednesday it will buy up to 200 small electric air taxis to help customers in urban areas get to the airport. The airline said it will help

electric-aircraft startup Archer develop an aircraft capable of helicopter-style, vertical takeoffs and landings. Archer hopes to deliver its first aircraft in 2024, if it wins certification

from the Federal Aviation Administration.

United said once the aircraft are flying, it and partner Mesa Airlines will acquire up to 200 that would be operated by another company.

According to an Archer presentation to investors, the orders are worth \$1 billion with an option for \$500 million more.

Privately held Archer, which is based in Palo Alto, California, announced separately that it has agreed to merge with Atlas Crest Investment Corp. and form a new publicly traded company. Archer and Atlas put a \$3.8 billion value on the deal, which sent Atlas shares up 22%. Archer's aircraft are designed to fly under battery

power for up to 60 miles (97 kilometers) at speeds of up to 150 mph (240 kph).

The company plans to launch service in congested areas close to airports. United estimated the air taxis could shuttle people from Hollywood to Los Angeles International Airport at about half the carbon emissions per passenger. Cowen analyst Helene Becker said United could use Archer's aircraft could operate between New York City and United's hub operation at Newark Liberty Airport in New Jersey, or from downtown Chicago to O'Hare Airport, allowing airline customers to avoid traffic.

Chicago-based United portrayed the move as part of a broader plan to

invest in technology behind cleaner modes of air travel. CEO Scott Kirby said Archer's design "has the clear potential to change how people commute within major metropolitan cities all over the world."

Aviation is a small contributor to greenhouse gases that cause climate change, but its share of the problem is growing rapidly. Many airlines including United have made investments in biofuel, but limited supplies are likely to hinder wider use of such alternatives to jet fuel for many years.

In December, United pledged to offset all its carbon emissions by 2050 in part by investing in technology to remove carbon from the air and bury it. □



This photo provided by Randall Irmis shows Plateosaurus models at the State Museum of Natural History in Stuttgart, Germany.
Associated Press

By **SETH BORENSTEIN**
AP Science Writer

Plant-eating dinosaurs probably arrived in the Northern Hemisphere millions of years after their meat-eating cousins, a delay likely caused by climate change, a new study found.

A new way of calculating the dates of dinosaur fossils found in Greenland shows that the plant eaters, called sauropodomorphs, were about 215 million years old, according to a study in Monday's Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. The fossils previously were thought to be as old as 228 million years. That changes how scientists think about dinosaur migration.

The earliest dinosaurs all seemed to first develop in what's now South America about 230 million years ago or longer. They then wandered north and all over the globe. The new study suggests not all dinosaurs could migrate at the same time.

So far, scientists haven't found any example of the earliest plant-eating dinosaur family in the Northern Hemisphere that's more than 215 million years old. One of the best examples of these is the Plateosaurus, a two-legged 23-foot (7-meter) vegetarian that weighed 8,800 pounds (4,000 kilograms).

Yet scientists find meat-eaters were pretty much worldwide by at least 220 million years ago, said Randy Irmis, a paleontologist at the University of Utah, who wasn't part of the research. The plant eaters "were late comers in the Northern Hemisphere," said study

lead author Dennis Kent, of Columbia University. "What took them so long?" Kent figured out what probably happened by looking at the atmosphere and climate at the time. During the Triassic era, 230 million years ago, carbon dioxide levels were 10 times higher

Some dinosaur migration was delayed by climate, study shows

than now. It was a hotter world with no ice sheets at the poles and two bands of extreme deserts north and south of the equator, he said.

It was so dry in those regions that there were not enough plants for the sauropodomorphs to survive the journey, but there were enough insects that meat-eaters could, Kent said. Kent used changes in Earth's magnetism in the soil to pinpoint the more exact date of the Greenland fossils. That highlighted the migration time gap, said several outside experts both in dinosaurs and and ancient

climate. □

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Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

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	2		7		6		8	
		8				2		
	1						6	
		5				4		
	7		3		4		1	
1		2		5		3		4

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A different kind of American odyssey in 'Nomadland'

By **LINDSEY BAHR**
AP Film Writer

The great recession didn't just eliminate jobs, it also erased an entire town. Six months after U.S. Gypsum closed its doors in Empire, Nevada, a company town since 1948, its zip code was retired and its inhabitants forced to leave. It's this brief history that opens Chloé Zhao's extraordinary "Nomadland," which follows one of those residents, Frances McDormand's Fern, on a journey through the American West to nowhere in particular. Fern is a vandweller, partially by choice and partially by circumstance — the shuttering of Empire, the costly and slow death of her husband and a deep-seated desire for solitude and exploration have left her with few connections and even fewer possessions, which she whittles down to the essentials and the most sentimental. Everything else is left in a storage unit off a desolate, snowy highway that looks like it is quite literally in the middle of nowhere. It might as well be on the moon. We don't hear much from Fern at the beginning, or



This image released by Searchlight Pictures shows Frances McDormand in a scene from the film "Nomadland."

Associated Press

ever really. An Amazon factory floor manager speaks more words than she does in the first few scenes. It's one of the beauties of "Nomadland," which is based on Jessica Bruder's book about the invisible casualties of the modern economy. This is a quiet, somewhat romantic, but mostly realistic exploration of a fringe population of aging workers and recent retirees who are living out the rest of their days wandering, picking up odd jobs and paychecks as seasonal workers at National Parks, South Dakota's Wall Drug and in massive Amazon warehouses through some-

thing called the Camper-Force program. McDormand disappears into Fern, which is no small accomplishment for an actor as recognizable as she is. She doesn't have a show-stopping monologue railing against the system that's left her with so little, or a tear-filled admission about why she has taken to the road. You pick up things here and there about her in normal conversation which helps propel her journey along to its quiet conclusion. But otherwise Fern is there to listen and to learn. She is the vehicle through which we meet the Vietnam vet with PTSD, the woman who

watched her parents die of cancer and the corporate America exile who saw a friend deteriorate in a desk job with a retirement boat in his driveway that he never got to use. Many are authentic nomads too, like Linda May, a main character in Bruder's book, and the vandwelling evangelist Bob Wells, a mini celebrity in his own right. There is always a lingering tension that things might take a turn. But for this most part, this is a film full of kind souls. They're just not the ones we're used to seeing on film. Zhao has since her first film been drawn to non-actors, who she

uses exceedingly well. But "Nomadland" is no doubt elevated thanks to the addition of seasoned performers, including David Strathairn in a great supporting role, who know how to inhabit the frame. Zhao is a spiritual descendent of another cinematic poet, Terrence Malick, and there are a handful of shots that look straight out of "The New World." But she also goes beyond Malick in some ways. He keeps the interesting and real people on the fringes and the glamorous movie stars at the center of his films. She stays unapologetically on the fringe. I'll admit, I had a bit of anxiety over revisiting "Nomadland" after naming it my top film of 2020 just over two months ago. You never know what will happen on a second watch, whether your appreciation will grow or diminish, whether you'll be as invigorated as the first time or, in a worst-case scenario, bored. It's not the kind of film you'll want to turn on every week, but two months was the perfect amount of distance to fall in love with "Nomadland" again. □

Mickey's flashy dress, glowing castle mark Disney World 50th



In this Dec. 21, 2020 file photo, A family walks past Cinderella Castle in the Magic Kingdom, at Walt Disney World in Lake Buena Vista, Fla.

Associated Press

By **MIKE SCHNEIDER**
Associated Press
ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Walt Disney World in Florida turns 50 in October. To help celebrate, Mickey Mouse and Minnie Mouse will be wearing flashier threads and iconic struc-

tures such as the Cinderella Castle and the golf-ball-like Spaceship Earth are getting new lighting, Disney officials said Friday while unveiling the first details of how the massive theme park resort will mark its milestone anniversary.

Plans for the 18-month celebration which starts in October are being made amid one of the toughest stretches the resort the size of the city of San Francisco has faced in its nearly 50 years. Last spring, Disney World closed for two months to help stop the spread of the new coronavirus, leading to the temporary furlough of 43,000 workers. Last fall, the company announced layoffs for 28,000 workers from its parks division in Florida and California due to limits on attendance and other pandemic-related issues. Disney officials said last November that revenue at its parks, experiences and products business fell 61% to \$2.6 billion. Before the pandemic, Disney World employed

around 77,000 workers. "If ever the world needed some pixie dust and a little extra magic from our cast, that time is now — and we hope you join us in the excitement," said Jeff Vahle, president of Walt Disney World Resort in an email to community leaders. Disney World has high hopes the 50th anniversary celebration provides Disney fans enough reason to return to the theme park resort during a time when vaccines will be more widely distributed. For starters, Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse and other costumed characters will be getting sparkling clothes that include iridescent fabric and embroidery with renderings of the Cinderella Castle. The resorts' iconic structures — the castle at Magic Kingdom,

Spaceship Earth at Epcot, the Hollywood Tower Hotel at Disney's Hollywood Studios and the Tree of Life at Animal Kingdom — will be glowing with special lighting during the celebration. The Cinderella Castle also will be made over with gold bunting and other golden embellishments. "It is going to be the world's most magical celebration," said Dana Carlson, an associate broadcast producer for Disney Live Entertainment. □

7	3	1	5	8	2	6	4	9
8	9	6	1	4	3	5	7	2
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3	4	8	9	6	1	2	5	7
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9	6	5	2	7	8	4	3	1
6	7	9	3	2	4	8	1	5
1	8	2	6	5	7	3	9	4
4	5	3	8	1	9	7	2	6

NFL teams brace for tight budgets with likely salary cap cut

By **SCHUYLER DIXON**
AP Pro Football Writer

It's too early to know where the NFL salary cap will end up in the range of \$180 million to \$198 million coming off a pandemic-dominated season that was completed on time but still cost the league billions of dollars in revenue.

A glimmer of good news for teams came this week in the potential floor of the cap going up to \$180 million after an initial agreement between the league and the players' union that it wouldn't be lower than \$175 million.

The higher figure in the possible range is the 2020 number, and simple economics seem to make it all but certain that a seven-year run of the salary cap going up at least \$10 million per season will end.

A flat-at-best cap could be an issue for the handful of teams currently over the \$180 million figure, including the two-time AFC champion Kansas City Chiefs.

It's also a potential problem for the Dallas Cowboys if they can't get a long-term deal with quarterback Dak Prescott, which would cause his cap charge to hit \$37 million with another franchise tag after being around \$31 million last year.



Dallas Cowboys quarterback Dak Prescott (4) scrambles out of the pocket before throwing a pass in the second half of an NFL football game against the Cleveland Browns in Arlington, Texas, in this Sunday, Oct. 4, 2020, file photo.

Associated Press

Dallas, however, is third among clubs with significant carryover cap space from 2020 at \$25.4 million. Only Cleveland (\$30.4 million) and the New York Jets (\$26.7 million) have more, according to figures released by the union.

A look at some of the key issues as NFL teams wait for the final number going into free agency, which starts March 17.

BIG GAP, REGARDLESS

Even without a reduction from the 2020 salary

cap, NFL teams will be in an uncomfortable place. Based on year-over-year increases from most of the past decade, the 2021 cap would be approaching — if not exceeding — \$210 million.

If the cap ended up at \$185 million, that's still \$25 million less than teams would have to spend without the lost revenues of 2020. And that's more than the franchise tag figure at every position except quarterback.

MONEY TO SPEND

Jacksonville, the Jets and New England have the most room under the cap, according to overthecap.com. The Jaguars will have somewhere around \$80 million to spend, possibly more, and could have a relatively inexpensive quarterback if Trevor Lawrence is drafted No. 1 overall and ends up starting for new coach Urban Meyer. Indianapolis also has some flexibility even after adding Carson Wentz in a trade

with Philadelphia and the \$25 million cap charge coming with the No. 2 overall pick from the 2016 draft.

BUDGETARY CONSTRAINTS

The Chiefs are among 13 teams currently over the cap, according to overthecap.com, which is projecting a \$180 million cap right now. Of those 13, eight made the playoffs, including New Orleans. However, two of the postseason qualifiers in Buffalo and Tennessee are marginally over the cutoff, and would be under if the cap ends up at \$185 million or higher.

"We've got several different models that we've looked at," Titans general manager Jon Robinson said. "We're in better shape than some teams are cap-wise and we're not as good as others, but we'll work through it."

The Saints have the biggest overage at \$69.5 million, although the possible retirement of quarterback Drew Brees could help along with several veterans who could be cut with significant cap savings.

PURGING THE VETS

New Orleans could be a good illustration of an issue that figures to play out across the league, with cap experts predicting widespread releasing of higher-paid veterans. □

MLB has 0.3% positive COVID-19 rate during intake testing

NEW YORK (AP) — Thirteen of 4,336 tests for COVID-19 were positive during intake for Major League Baseball's spring training, a rate of 0.3%. The commissioner's office said Friday that nine positive samples involved players and four involved staff. Positive tests included 11 of the 30 teams.

After the intake screening, there were no new positives among 2,298 monitoring test samples. Samples thus far totaled 6,634.

All players on 40-man rosters and players with minor league contracts invited to big league training camp are screened. Also tested are all other on-field personnel such as manag-

ers, coaches and athletic trainers, strength and conditioning staff and physicians.

Team owner, front office management, communications staff, groundskeepers, clubhouse and travel staff and ballpark operations employees who require access to restricted areas also are screened.

All individuals tested were required to maintain a five-day at-home quarantine and undergo screening that included a PCR test, antibody test and contactless temperature check.

Before Los Angeles Dodgers third baseman Justin Turner tested positive during the sixth and final game

of the World Series last Oct. 27, MLB said four days earlier that players had gone 54 consecutive days without any positive tests.

In the final figures released last year, MLB said it had collected 172,740 samples and that 91 had been positive, or 0.05%. Fifty-seven of 91 positives have been players, and 21 of the 30 teams have had a person covered by the monitoring test positive.

MLB and the players' association combined to spend about \$35 million on COVID-19 testing and rules last year during pre-season training, which started July 1, the delayed and shortened 60-game season,



Cleveland Indians manager Terry Francona looks on during spring training baseball workouts for pitchers and catchers in Avondale, Ariz., in this Thursday, Feb. 13, 2020, file photo.

Associated Press

and the expanded 16-team playoffs. There were 45 regular-season games postponed for

COVID-19-related reasons last year but just two were not made up, between St. Louis and Detroit. □

At Australian Open, Djokovic chases 18th Slam, Medvedev 1st

By **HOWARD FENDRICH**
AP Tennis Writer

Novak Djokovic lost his first career Grand Slam final at the U.S. Open. Then he won his second, which came at the Australian Open.

And look where he is now, more than a dozen years later: One victory from a ninth championship at Melbourne Park and his 18th major title overall, which would put him two behind rivals Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal for the most by a man in tennis history.

Daniil Medvedev also lost his first career Grand Slam final at the U.S. Open. And now he will try to win in his second try, which comes at the Australian Open on Sunday (at 7:30 p.m. local time, 3:30 a.m. EST) — against Djokovic.

"I know that to beat him, you need to just show your best tennis, be at your best physically, maybe four or five hours, and be at your best mentally, maybe for five hours," Medvedev said. "I would say to win a Slam, especially against somebody (like) Novak, is already a big motivation, and I don't think there is anything that can make it bigger."

It is an intergenerational showdown — Serbia's Djokovic turns 34 in May;



Russia's Daniil Medvedev reacts after winning a point against Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas during their semifinal match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Friday, Feb. 19, 2021.

Associated Press

Russia's Medvedev just turned 25 — and another in the simmering standoff between the Big Three and the next wave of up-and-coming players hoping to supplant the group that has dominated for more than 15 years.

Federer, Nadal and Djokovic have combined to win 14 of the past 15 majors (Dominic Thiem at last year's U.S. Open was the exception), and 57 of the last 69.

"Spice it up a little bit," by adding a new name to the

list of Slam champs, suggested Stefanos Tsitsipas, the 22-year-old who came back from two sets down to eliminate Nadal in the quarterfinals before losing to Medvedev 6-4, 6-2, 7-5 in the semifinals. "Wouldn't be bad."

Here's part of what makes this final intriguing: It pits one of the greatest ever to play the sport, and at a site he's dominated, against a player who currently is playing better than anyone in men's tennis.

The No. 1-seed Djokovic is 17-0 in Australian Open semifinals and finals, making him nearly as much of a lock on the blue hard courts of Melbourne Park as Nadal is on the red clay courts of Roland Garros.

"The more I win, the better I feel coming back each year," Djokovic said. "I think it's kind of also logical to expect that. The love affair keeps going."

No. 5 Medvedev, meanwhile, is on a 20-match winning streak dating to last

season, a run that features 12 victories against members of the Top 10 (one against Djokovic).

"The confidence, when you beat everybody, is just great," Medvedev said, "because I think people start maybe to be a little bit scared about you."

Another reason to watch: These guys play somewhat similar styles.

"When he's in the zone he doesn't miss. He goes down the line, cross, forehand, backhand. He doesn't miss. That's what is the most, the toughest, part of playing against him," Medvedev said. "I think that's where I should be good, also."

Both are quite talented at roaming the court this way and that, covering ground to prolong points and frustrate foes, until finding an opening for switching from defense to offense in a snap. That's how Medvedev produced the shot of the day — week? tournament? year? longer? — against Tsitsipas, ranging wide of the deuce court's doubles alley for a forehand return of serve, before sprinting to his left, sliding with his feet at an awkward angle and producing a down-the-line backhand passing winner that was simply spectacular. □

NCAA OKs limited fan attendance at men's, women's tourneys



In this Jan. 19, 2017, file photo, Mitch Barnhart, athletic director at Kentucky, takes part in a panel discussion at the NCAA Convention in Nashville, Tenn.

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — The NCAA will allow a limited number of fans to attend all rounds of its men's basketball tournament in Indiana and later rounds of its women's tournament in Texas.

The governing body said Friday it is permitting 25% capacity at the men's tournament venues to allow for social distancing. That figure will include all participants and essential staff along with the family members of team players and coaches.

On the women's side, the NCAA will allow a capacity of up to 17% at each venue from the Sweet 16 to the Final Four. Games taking place for the first two rounds will limit attendance

to team guests.

In each case, attendees must wear face coverings, while cleaning and disinfecting efforts will be emphasized at venues in keeping with COVID-19 safety protocols. The NCAA said it acted in conjunction with local health officials for each tournament.

NCAA chief medical officer Brian Hainline said the decision for the men's tournament also followed conversations with the organization's medical advisory group and will rely on testing and monitoring services from the Indiana University Health system.

"The No. 1 priority for decisions around the tournament continues to be the safety and well-being of

everyone participating in the event," Hainline said.

The NCAA had previously announced the 68-team tournament will be played entirely in Indiana because of the pandemic, with most games in Indianapolis. The tournament will begin with First Four games on March 18 at home arenas for Big Ten Conference schools Purdue and Indiana, with those venues located about a one-hour drive — in opposite directions — from downtown Indianapolis. At Indiana, the school said it will allow up to 500 fans for tournament games at Assembly Hall with some seats reserved for local medical workers and first responders who have been vaccinated. □